

## **PUBLIC WORKS COMMISSION**

## **MEETING MINUTES**

Pursuant to the notice filed with the Town Clerk, a virtual public meeting of the Public Works Commission in accordance with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Order of March 12, 2020 suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law was held at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 10, 2021. This meeting has been properly noticed with the Town Clerk and has been recorded.

### **PRESENT:**

#### *Commissioners:*

Jef Fasser  
Andrea Solomon  
James Terry

#### *Absent:*

David DeLong  
K.C. Winslow

#### *Staff:*

Alan H. Cathcart, Director  
Aaron I. Miklosko, MSFM, Highway and Grounds Superintendent  
Steve Dookran, Town Engineer  
Jeffrey A. Murawski, Water and Sewer Superintendent  
Nelson Mui, Management Analyst  
Bob Hill, Management Analyst  
Melissa Simoncini, Environmental Services Program Administrator  
Anna R. Trout, Administrative & Special Projects Coordinator

#### *Other:*

Robert Hilsinger (League of Women Voters Observer)  
Nancy Nelson (Historical Commission Observer)  
Rod Riedel, 324 Main Street (Council on Aging Observer)

### **A: ACTION ITEMS**

**A-1 through A-3** - The meeting was convened at 4:00 PM. by Commissioner Fasser. Attendance roll call of commissioners was made as follows: James Terry, Aye, Andrea Solomon, Aye, and Jef Fasser, Aye.

The meeting minutes from Oct. 13, 2021 were approved by roll call: James Terry, Aye, Andrea Solomon, Aye, and Jef Fasser, Aye.

Director Cathcart explained that the next meeting on December 8 will include a Roads Program Update as well as a review of the General Fund Capital Plan. Commissioner Terry asked if the updated StreetScan Report will be available at

the next meeting, to which Director Cathcart responded the update should be available at that time.

## **D: DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS**

### **D-1: 5B Seymour St. – Groundwater Conservancy Dist. Zoning Bylaw Request**

Director Cathcart explained that this request for work would have impacted the Groundwater Conservancy District which is the protected area around the Town's public water supplies as well as the Town's wetlands. This project had been proposed, and as part of the ZBA process recommendations were sought from Public Health, Public Works and the NRC. In this case the project, as of last evening, has been withdrawn, so no other discussion or action is required at this time.

### **D-2: Envision Concord-Bridge to 2030 - Update**

Commissioner Fasser expressed appreciation to Concord Public Works staff for all the work that went into reviewing and responding to the items relevant to Public Works and providing a detailed cover memo and matrix. He explained that he is planning on attending the November 15<sup>th</sup> meeting where Town Departments and Committees will be discussing this material.

Director Cathcart explained that the Envision Concord document was developed by a wide range of stakeholders and is available online. Much of the current public works staff were not on board when this report was put together, so having staff provide updates on specific items introduced some challenges. While fairly time-intensive, completing the matrix turned out to be a valuable exercise which allowed senior staff to gain a better understanding of community interests which directly relates to many of the activities performed with CPW. By populating the summary matrix CPW could help the community track progress on broad concepts as well as specific tasks outlined within Envision Concord.

The memo included in the PWC packet provides an overview and summary of projects, and specific tasks that public works has been or plans to be involved in. It was prepared for the PWC to allow them to get up to speed as to these activities with the goal of getting their input as to efforts and direction. A response, with the Public Works Commission approval, will be provided to the Select Board, comprised of a cover memo and detailed matrix. Select Board staff will then compile input from all sources into this matrix.

Director Cathcart referenced the summary memo included in the PWC's meeting packet that highlighted the significant efforts made by CPW that fit within the Envision framework. While these activities had been advanced, without direct knowledge of Envision, moving forward, staff have a much better

understanding as to how our projects can be framed and managed to fit into the long term interests of the Town.

Commissioner Fasser explained that this is a great exercise indicating that all departments are going through this same process and working towards common goals. He noted that CPW does a lot of things as part of their core operations now that support many of the Envision actions. If CPW is asked to take on new responsibilities moving forward there needs to be careful consideration of any particular resources or skill sets that may be needed to take on that additional responsibility. CPW shouldn't be saying yes to items where they may not have the funding, staffing or equipment required to successfully achieve the ask.

Commissioner Terry felt the key areas of involvement by Concord Public Works are in the section of the report identified as Mobility and Transportation, and Public Facilities and Infrastructure. He expressed that these two areas will likely require the most action from public works while also providing support in other areas.

Commissioner Solomon agreed that it is important to have the expertise and resources required before taking on additional initiatives.

Town Engineer, Steve Dookran, felt that the memorandum and matrix represented a collaboration with all Public Works staff, acknowledging the Envision Plan is done at a high level. There is a great deal of preliminary work which must be accomplished to achieve these goals.

Highway and Grounds Superintendent, Aaron Miklosko expressed thanks to the Commissioners for their support in recognizing the efforts made and that taking on new initiatives would require additional resources.

Environmental Services Program Administrator, Melissa Simoncini added that Envision goals directly relating to solid waste and recycling were not directly called out, but we will continue to all work together as a department to assure all goals are met. Director Cathcart mentioned that there will be opportunities to include elements of the solid waste and recycling program in the overall carbon footprint reduction effort.

Water and Sewer Superintendent Jeffrey Murawski was introduced. His first day with the Town of Concord was November 1, so he is learning about this initiative and will look to incorporate community interests as he begins to better understand his role in such matters.

Rod Riedel, 324 Main Street (Council on Aging Observer), expressed that he appreciates what the Public Works Commission and Concord Public Works does for the Town. He added that expanding responsibilities and requests will need to be weighed with budget constraints and whether new efforts will mean that some existing initiatives may not be fully staffed or funded.

Commissioner Terry added that points should be taken from the Director's memorandum with regard to the efforts already undertaken by Concord Public Works staff in assisting other departments with their initiatives.

Commissioner Fasser explained that public works can be a department where requests are made for many different efforts.

Commissioner Terry **MOVED**, Commissioner Solomon **SECONDED** and it was **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED** by roll call vote as follows: James Terry, Aye, Andrea Solomon, Aye and Jef Fasser, Aye.

To authorize the Director to send an update to the Select Board on behalf of the Commission updating them as to progress and goals relating to Envision Concord – Bridge to 2030 identified as detailed within a memorandum from Director Cathcart, to the Public Works Commission, dated 11/5/2021

### **D-3: Winter Maintenance Presentation**

Director Cathcart introduced Superintendent Miklosko, who provided CPW's annual Winter Maintenance Presentation.

Superintendent Miklosko explained that the Concord Public Works and Public Works Commission policy is to maintain a level of service that keeps Concord's street system, which includes sidewalks and parking lots, passable and safe for pedestrian and vehicular traffic; especially for emergency vehicles such as Fire, Police, Ambulance or any other vital service as much of the time as possible within the limitations imposed by the extremes of nature and the resources available.

Each storm is different and operations need to be adjusted as necessary. The goal is to have the road surfaces cleared of any snow and ice by the end of the operation. Our priorities are public safety, employee safety, efficiency, fiscal responsibility and sustainability. Our maintained areas include 107 miles of public roadways, 4 miles of private roadways, 44 miles of sidewalks and 12 parking lots.

Some highlights from the 2020-2021 winter season include our first event of the season on October 30 with three inches of snow accumulating within a twelve hour duration. Salt treatment and plowing was performed by CPW employees with a cost of \$17,949.47. Our largest duration storm occurred on Feb 1-2 with 20 inches of snow over a 27 hour period. Full deployment of CPW staff and contractors performed salt treatment and plowing, with snow removal operations after the storm for a cost of \$124,086.53. The final storm of the season occurred on April 16, with 4 inches of snow within a five hour duration. Salt treatment and plowing were performed by CPW employees with a cost of \$9,287.07.

The total expense for winter maintenance in FY21 was \$806,234.95. This is a combination of 5,161 CPW staff labor hours and 1,315.5 contractor labor/equipment hours. 3,775.75 tons of road salt were applied to roadways throughout the 19 winter maintenance response events. There were two post-storm snow removal operations. The total snow accumulation for the season was 51.5 inches.

The four major components of our winter maintenance program include planning, operations management, fleet maintenance and treatment and plowing techniques. Planning for snow starts in July of each year, with procurement of contracted services for operators, equipment, vehicles and a helpful weather forecasting service that is used all year long. Procurement of road salt, plow blades and vehicle/equipment parts is also undertaken. Every season we review our routes to optimize efficiency and mark potential hazards. We also look at equipment and vehicle assignments. We review construction and developments that may have occurred since the last season.

CPW coordinates with the Concord Municipal Light Plant (CMLP) when there is a major storm as they assist with downed trees and wires. The Town also works closely with the Facilities Department to assure that Town offices are open, and Public Safety, in the event police details are required. We work on improving communications by monitoring other department emergency calls to assist when required. We also work closely with the School Department to assure school buses can safely operate.

Our employees participate in Baystate Roads training courses for winter maintenance, in addition to a CPW winter maintenance operations team meeting each fall, where operators have the opportunity to drive their routes, marking hazards that appear.

Our operations team consists of 23 CPW equipment operators, 15 contractor equipment operators, along with one snow desk dispatcher who is on the job 24 hours per day during a storm, who also assists with responding to resident requests and issues. There is an administrative assistant who responds to telephone inquiries during business hours, a fleet supervisor and a master mechanic that are always available during a snow event, along with three supervisors who are driving through Town, supervising the crews, monitoring the roadways and responding to issues that may arise.

There are 22 snow plowing routes in Town which include all public roadways and private roads which meet criteria set at Town Meeting. There are three sidewalk routes in business districts and school areas and a number of public parking lots. There are also thirteen de-icing routes which include roads, sidewalks and parking lots.

Continuous monitoring of forecasted conditions is performed in addition to the utilization of a Road Weather Information System. Every storm is different so

our strategy for dealing with those conditions varies to meet those unique requirements. Communications prior to the storm help to keep everyone updated. During operations radio communications keep operations staff aware of conditions and response requirements. In order to keep track of conditions, remote stations are installed at six different locations throughout Town, along with monitoring devices on vehicles that keep track of ground surface and air temperatures and visual inspection of roadways. Adjustments are made during the storm response for breakdowns and vacancies.

Communications are maintained via radio between operators, the snow desk and supervisors. Public safety radios are monitored along with communications with other departments and consistent customer service response.

Proper maintenance of the winter fleet is key. There are 28 plow vehicles/equipment which include heavy and medium duty plow trucks, wing plows, front plows, belly scrapers, loaders and backhoes, ten spreaders with ground speed controllers, three sidewalk plows and two brine trucks.

Regular cleaning of winter equipment is performed to prevent corrosion. Two skilled mechanics work regularly on our equipment. Operators are required to perform a circle check before and after each operation. Spreaders are calibrated during the season and a fleet mechanic is on-duty during all snow and ice operations.

We utilize a Roadway Weather Information System (RWIS). These devices are mounted to utility poles and provide real time data for road temperature, air temperature and humidity. They produce live imagery that can be monitored remotely. This tool allows the Town to respond to changing conditions promptly, which reduces cost.

Storm response techniques will depend on forecasted and actual conditions. Pretreatment is critical to prevent snow/ice from bonding to the roadway. It prevents hard-pack and prevents ice from adhering to the roadway. Treated road salt (magnesium chloride) is applied when temperatures are below 25 degrees. Liquid brine is manufactured in-house with road salt and water which is applied days in advance of a storm event.

Plowing operations begin when snow accumulation is greater than two inches. There are 18 roadway plowing routes, three sidewalk plowing routes and one walking route. Sidewalk plowing is started at the same time as roadway plowing. Plowing continues until snow fall is complete. Snow is removed from parking lots when accumulation reaches two inches. Snow is removed from intersections, crosswalks and cul-de-sacs to improve visibility and traffic flow.

Following a major snow fall event, business district snow removal operations occur. This is completed overnight following a storm event with an average cost of \$15,000. A decision is made regarding this process, depending upon the

snow accumulation, future forecast and the time of year. There are two snow storage facilities. One at the compost site on Walden Street and another on MCI property on Commonwealth Ave.

Working closely with the School Department, last year we began plowing the synthetic turf Doug White and Memorial Fields, which allowed an extension of the sports season. Snow piles are removed from sidewalks and roadside areas as needed to increase visibility. Hydrant accessibility is important and is completed with coordination with the Water Division and Fire Department.

Commissioner Terry was pleased to see that there is some new equipment that has been acquired. He also asked if CPW was having difficulty in acquiring the services of snowplow contractors. Superintendent Miklosko answered that we are fortunate to have a good relationship with our contractors and that we do not have any issues in that regard. He also explained that CPW is looking for additional equipment which will be discussed at the Public Works Commission's December meeting.

Commissioner Terry suggested that this winter maintenance presentation be posted on the website to allow residents to view this important information. He asked if winter crews are provided with enough rest. Superintendent Miklosko explained that he and his supervisors monitor the employee's condition during a storm, that their safety is a priority, and they provide time for employees to rest.

Commissioner Solomon expressed her thanks for the hard work expended by the department. She also asked if supply chain delays are affecting operations. Superintendent Miklosko replied that there has been a delay in acquiring new equipment and supplies that are crucial to ongoing operations. We are doing our best to keep materials stocked.

Commissioner Fasser asked about the number of RWIS units that we have available, to which Superintendent Miklosko replied we have five for this season. He also asked about plowing of the synthetic playing fields and who covered the cost of equipment and labor. Superintendent Miklosko answered that CPW purchased a specific plow for that purpose with funding through the winter maintenance budget, and another piece of equipment for this purpose was acquired through a Gift Fund. Winter Maintenance has a specific budget where this type of labor is charged.

There are 40 miles of sidewalk in Town which are plowed, and there are three plowing routes. There are parameters in the Sidewalk Plowing Policy that indicate which sidewalks are plowed. In addition there is one treatment route to de-ice walkways. When asked how the sidewalk plowing policy was determined and how changes or additions could be made, Director Cathcart explained we are always trying to expand services, but this is tempered with our resources available. The Sidewalk Plowing Program/Policy was put together with safety as a determining factor. Proximity to schools and downtown areas

were highlighted as a priority. The resources required to expand this program makes it difficult to do. CPW needs to be careful not to over-commit and under-perform. We are already dealing with decreased labor with regard to sidewalk plowing.

#### **D-4: Director's Report**

- **Solid Waste and Recycling Program (Presented by Melissa Simoncini, Environmental Services Program Administrator) –**
  - **DropOff Day** – The Fall DropOff Day event was held at Keyes Road on Saturday, October 16. 800 vehicles participated in the event with a record 300 bags of Styrofoam collected. We also collected almost as much other materials since prior to the pandemic. The event would not be possible without the assistance of a great group of volunteers and CPW staff.
  - **Paint Shed** – The Paint Shed at the compost site located at 755 Walden Street is open from April through November each year. Residents can drop off paint for reuse/recycling and pick up usable paint. So far this year we have packaged up 20 cubic yard containers. There will be a delay in having these materials picked up as a result of lack of availability of drivers and reduction in capacity at production facilities.
  - **Landfill Inspection** – Our yearly inspection of the condition of the cap at the landfill was performed.
- **Engineering (Presented by Steve Dookran, Town Engineer) –**
  - **Hubbard Street** – Drainage work is being completed at this time. We hope to have the road binder paved by the end of this season.
  - **Sudbury Road Crosswalk** – This work has been completed.
  - **Monument Street Culvert** – The final paving of the patch has been completed for the season. A mill and overlay will be completed next season.
  - **2021 Roads Program** – Final paving was done on Peter Spring Road. Minor punch list items remain.
  - **Mill and Fill** – Small areas of repair have this treatment performed until such time as full paving can be completed.
  - **At-Grade Railroad Crossings within FRA Quiet Zone** – Completion of the latest filing with the Federal Railroad Administration attesting that equipment is functioning as intended within these areas was performed.
  - **MassDOT Bottleneck Grant** – The Engineering Division applied for this grant whose intention is to ease traffic congestion. We hope to receive grant funds to assist with better flow of traffic in the Main Street area of West Concord from Church Street through Baker Ave.



- **Highway, Grounds and Cemetery (Presented by Aaron Miklosko, Highway and Grounds Superintendent) –**
  - **Winter Preparations** – Salt spreaders had been stored for the season and are now being installed on trucks, ready for use in the coming months.
  - **Removing Outdoor Barricades** – Barricades that had been setup for outdoor dining have been removed for the winter season.
  - **Compost Site** – This is a very busy season with residents bringing in leaves and grass clippings that we make into compost for reuse.
  - **Route 2 Rotary Water Main Repair** – Highway and grounds crews assisted with this repair work including paving after repair of the water main leak.
  - **Emerson Field Improvements** – This work has been ongoing this summer including the relocation of swing sets and installation of rubberized surface for fall protection. Three water fountains were also installed as part of this project.
  
- **Water/Sewer (Presented by Jeffrey Murawski, Water/Sewer Superintendent)-** (Jeff is the new water/sewer superintendent starting just last week. He comes to Concord after working as Deputy Commissioner of Wastewater for the City of Fitchburg and has prior experience working in a water/wastewater engineering/design firm.)
  - **Annursnac Hill Reservoir** – The concrete floor has been poured. Refill and disinfection will occur soon.
  - **Water main leak at Rt. 2A Westbound Lane by Rotary** – All divisions of Public Works were called upon to respond to an emergency water main leak identified on an 8 inch cast iron pipe under the westbound lane of Rt. 2 just before the Rt. 2 rotary on November 4. Several days of well-coordinated planning culminated in the successful closure of the westbound lane of Rt. 2 at 7 PM, the water leak repair was completed by 10 PM, and road patch completed by midnight. No interruption of water service was required.

Director Cathcart complimented all divisions of CPW for working together so successfully with this major task. He also mentioned that the latest PFAS third quarter sampling results indicate nothing interesting or new. The numbers are in the single digits, consistent with what we've seen in the past.

#### **D-5: Commissioner's Comments**

None.

#### **D-6: Public Comments**

None.

Commissioner Terry MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 5:49 PM,  
Commissioner Solomon **SECONDED**, and it was **VOTED** by roll call vote as  
follows: James Terry, Aye, Andrea Solomon, Aye and Jef Fasser, Aye.

**ADJOURNED: 5:49 PM**

Respectfully submitted,

Approved,

Anna R. Trout

Administrative & Special Projects Coordinator  
Concord Public Works

Jef Fasser

Public Works Commission